



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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CONTACT: Joseph Donovan, Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

Wisconsin public library use continues to grow

State ranks first in interlibrary loans per capita

MADISON—Wisconsin's public libraries continued to increase the level of services and technology provided to the public, with little or no growth in library income and staffing levels, according to final 2004 data.

Public library circulation surpassed 56.8 million items, an increase of nearly 4 percent over 2003. User visits to libraries increased to almost 32 million. Interlibrary loans, the key indicator of resource sharing among libraries, continued to show a large annual increase growing to 4.8 million, a 17 percent increase over 2003. Meanwhile, library staffing remained at 2003 levels and total library service expenditures increased only about 2.5 percent.

"Public libraries support life-long learning and are essential to the strength and health of our state," noted State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster. "Wisconsin's public libraries and library systems are to be commended for continuing to cost-effectively provide all Wisconsin residents with high levels of library service, including BadgerLink, which provides access to more than 700 newspapers and 11,000 magazines. Wisconsin's public library systems have strong programs of service for their member libraries, ensuring that Wisconsin residents have equal access to informational materials required to do coursework, meet curriculum needs, or pursue personal and business interests regardless of where they live or their special needs or circumstances."

Public library use has grown at a much faster rate than Wisconsin's population. While the state has gained only 3.2 percent in population since 2000, library circulation has increased 21.5 percent and the number of Internet-connected public use computer terminals available in libraries has grown by 64 percent. A grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation supported the distribution of 743 personal computers

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and servers to 235 Wisconsin public libraries and branches in 2003. The grant will continue to provide technology training through 2006. All public libraries now have Internet connections, and almost all of them provide high speed Internet access. Informational databases, such as those provided statewide through BadgerLink, are available to all state residents through their local library as well as in homes, schools, and workplaces.

The most recent statistics available from the National Center for Education Statistics (2003) place Wisconsin first in interlibrary loans per capita, eighth in circulation per capita, and ninth in public library visits per capita. An estimated 57 percent of Wisconsin residents, about 3.2 million people, are registered public library users.

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